



SENATOR
BILL HARDIMAN

Hardiman Herald

*Chair, Families & Human
Services Committee
Appropriations Committee:
Chair, Family Independence Agency,
Commerce Labor &
Economic Development,
Capitol Outlay,
Higher Education*

GREETINGS FROM STATE SENATOR BILL HARDIMAN

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE PASSES FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY (FIA) BUDGET

The Family Independence Agency (FIA) Appropriations Subcommittee reported SB 283 (S-1) out of committee today with a unanimous 3-0 vote. As chairman of this subcommittee I have recommended several changes to the Governor's proposed budget.

The budget reflects a new recognition of the importance of marriage and family programs. Unless we start spending funds on root causes and structural issues, all future FIA budgets will only be funding the effects and not the causes of so many issues for the department's clients.

SB 283 contains just under \$4 billion dollars, and funds programs ranging from cash assistance to child and adult protective services, juvenile programs for troubled and delinquent youth and programs to help clients make the transition from welfare to work. The main focus of the Family Independence Agency has shifted over the past several years moving more families off of cash assistance programs/welfare to work. My focus when balancing this budget is how to provide families with more programs designed to make this transition possible.

Specific changes that I recommended are restoring or increasing funding for marriage initiatives, fatherhood initiatives, the teenage parenting counseling programs, kinship care, before and after school programs, Project Zero staff workers to target specific communities for intense welfare to work programs and the clothing allowance for children of FIA clients. While restoring funding for specific, successful innovations in these programs, SB 283 also funds the expansion of these innovations to additional counties across the state. Additionally, the subcommittee funded programs which allow for the investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect and also for strong partnerships with public and private providers of these services.

I am confident that the subcommittee report on SB 283 balances the needs for public accountability of funds with responsible programs to help meet the present needs and make critical new investments in addressing root causes of social and community concerns. I believe strong families build strong communities, and the FIA budget approved today furthers that goal.

SB 283 (S-1) is scheduled to appear before the full Senate Appropriations Committee on April 30, 2003. The other members of the committee are Senator Tom George (R-Kalamazoo) and Senator Martha Scott (D-Highland).

FIGHTING TO SAVE THE GRAND RAPIDS LIBRARY GRANT

The History, Arts and Library Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee voted last week to end the special library grants to the Grand Rapids and Detroit libraries. Both grants have been in the budget for years to recognize the special collections and use at those libraries.

I offered an amendment in the full Appropriations Committee to restore part of those grants while slightly increasing library funding across the state. A second amendment offered as a further compromise would have phased out the special grants over three years to allow the libraries time to adjust. Both amendments were carefully considered, but ultimately defeated in committee. In light of the overall budget, it has always been an uphill struggle to restore these grants.

I was disappointed to fall short of votes on the amendments, but was also encouraged by the supporting comments of both Republican and Democratic Senators. I will continue to build responsible, problem-solving coalitions on this and other issues important to the Grand Rapids area.

****UPDATE ON MICHIGAN'S 2-1-1 SYSTEM****

The non-emergency 211 number reserved by the FCC has recently been adopted by the Michigan Legislature. Michigan residents now have access to an easy-to-remember, free-to-the-user phone number linking people with the services they need 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Whether a parent wants help for his child with a learning impairment, a frightened wife seeks shelter from her volatile husband, a senior wants to volunteer or a family searches for employment, 211 can locate the help they are looking for. Dialing 211 connects the caller to a specialist who can assess the caller's needs and link the caller to the right solution using services from federal, state and local government and non-profit agencies. The new 211 non-emergency number is free of charge to the user, and is currently available in Kent and Calhoun Counties. Approximately 66 percent of the Michigan population will have the service available within 12 months.

COST-SAVING MEASURES FOR EDUCATION INTRODUCED

Testimony received from school administrators during a series of informational hearings have transformed into legislation designed to save school districts funds in their operating budgets. Over the last three weeks the Senate Education Committee invited local school administrators to come forth and testify to the committee suggestions on how school districts across the state can save money in their budgets. Based on those suggestions a five-bill school flexibility package was introduced that includes: eliminating the state mandated minimum number of schools days, streamlining the Center for Educational Performance and Information, eliminating professional development requirements, eliminating restrictions on the use of at-risk and school readiness funds and eliminating 'Education YES.' The legislation will be addressed by the Senate Education Committee.

GAS GOUGING WEBSITE LAUNCHED

Michigan consumers now have an additional tool to ensure that they are not subject to gas gouging. A new website was launched this week, www.michigan.gov/gasprices, to provide information on the quality, quantity and prices on gasoline from gas stations around the state. The website has been developed by the Departments of Agriculture and Information Technology, the Michigan Public Service Commission and the Attorney General's Office.

Consumers may search for gas prices by city and zip code, receive fuel efficiency tips and find gas gouging complaint forms on the website.

CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR OUR TROOPS

As Operation Iraqi Freedom continues, please keep our soldiers in the Middle East and their loved ones throughout the world in your thoughts and prayers. These young men and women are risking their lives for our safety, security, and freedom we enjoy everyday. Some have given the ultimate sacrifice. As a Vietnam Veteran, I have a true understanding of their commitment and bravery. May God be with them all.

NEW PHOTOS POSTED ON WEBSITE

Visit www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Hardiman/Hardiman.htm to view photographs of my visit to the White House.

CONTACT INFORMATION



The Hardiman Herald by Senator Bill Hardiman is designed to provide residents and organizations with a timely update of his activity in Lansing. If you have any questions, please contact Senator Hardiman's office.

Phone: (866) 305-2129.

Fax: (517) 373-5801.

E-mail: senbhardiman@senate.michigan.gov.

Mail: P.O. Box 30036 Lansing, Michigan 48913.

Our website address is:

www.senate.state.mi.us/gop/senator/hardiman/